

## **Ask Fr. James**

### **Where did the word 'gospel' come from and why is the gospel good news?**

The word "gospel" is the translation of the Greek word "euangelion" which means, to bring or announce good news or good announcement. In Isaiah. 61:1-2 the prophet talked about the one who is 'to bring good news [euangelisasthai] to the poor.' This text is interpreted as a foreshadowing of Jesus' own ministry explicitly described in Luke 4:16-21 where Jesus said "I have been anointed to bring good news to the poor and to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to the oppressed and announce the Lord's years of favours...". Thus, Euangelion or Gospel is the root word for evangelization which means to invite people to come hear the good news that Jesus brought.

There are four canonical Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and all recall the greatest good news of all time; God coming to earth in Jesus Christ. It is good news that God became Man and lived among us - the Word became flesh. By the very fact of God coming to live among us, the kingdom of God has come to us and is at work in the world. This is good news.

However, the word as noun - 'gospel, good news' (euangelion) is one of several terms which Christianity owes to Paul. 60 of its 76 occurrences in the NT appear in the Pauline letters. Mark used it seven times and Matthew uses it only four times, while Luke and John do not use it at all." The four Gospels serve as an ever-reforming catalyst leading the community into the mystery of Christ's living presence and they provide an irreplaceable bridge connecting the worshipping community to the risen Christ.

The deepest need of all human beings is the need for reconciliation with God. For God so love the world, He sent his only begotten Son (John 3:16). It is good news that Jesus demonstrated by his death and his resurrection. He bore our sins and took our place on the cross and he rose again to defeat all the powers of evil and death.

Through the Gospels we come to the understanding that God chose not to remain hidden from us, his human creatures, nor to approach us only in anger at our rebellion and disobedience but to reach out to us in love and grace through Jesus Christ. This is why Paul calls this Good News. He says; "it is 'the gospel of God' and the good news about the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, .. (Rom. 1:16-17).

God offered us this love for free. Our appreciation of God's love is what we come to church to celebrate every time we attend Mass. A thanksgiving for what Jesus has done out of God's love for us. This whole story is what the Bible conveys as good news. Thus, the word 'gospel' means that salvation is always and has always been a free gift, offered by our loving creator to all persons, regardless of the culture-specific social and religious conditioning that they belong. This is very good news!

*You may email/send your faith questions to Fr. James and he will answer them in our Sunday Bulletins.*

